

# PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN

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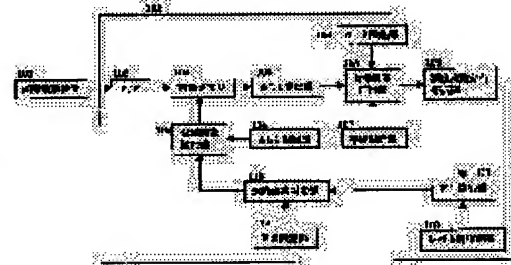
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## (54) IMAGE PROCESSING METHOD AND APPARATUS THEREOF

### (57)Abstract:

**PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED:** To provide an image processing method and an image processing apparatus for greatly reducing the correction processing time of dust noise and improving the productivity of high-quality image data, by automatically detecting the dust noise contained in image data as defective pixels for correction, and further for adding the elimination of the dust noise also in a series of automatic processing from the reading to the output of the image data.

**SOLUTION:** An arbitrary pixel to be noticed is compared with a nearby pixel to extract a pixel within a specific range including the pixel to be noticed for satisfying specific conditions as a target pixel. A histogram is created for the extracted target pixel, and the flatness of a given region is confirmed according to histogram characteristics, thus verifying that the defective pixel is included in the given region. When the defective pixel is included, a pixel where the gradation level with a correction value determined according to given conditions satisfies specific conditions is extracted as a defective pixel, thus substituting the correction value for the defective pixel.



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**CLAIMS**

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[Claim(s)]

[Claim 1]An image processing method which processes image data constituted by pixel, comprising:

An object picture element detection process which detects an object picture element group containing a noticed picture element from which a difference of a gradation level with a neighborhood picture element becomes beyond the 1st threshold from said image data.

A defect pixel determination process judged to be that in which said object picture element contains a defect pixel when a criterion value is calculated based on concentration frequency distribution which comprises said object picture element and this criterion value turns into beyond the 2nd threshold.

A correcting process which a gradation level difference with an adjusted value calculated from said concentration frequency distribution among said object picture elements extracts a pixel which is beyond the 3rd threshold as said defect pixel, and corrects this defect pixel using said adjusted value.

[Claim 2]An image processing method which processes image data constituted by pixel, comprising:

An object picture element detection process which detects an object picture element group containing a noticed picture element from which a difference of a gradation level with a neighborhood picture element becomes beyond the 1st threshold from said image data.

A defect pixel determination process judged to be that in which said object picture element contains a defect pixel when the 1st and 2nd criterion values are calculated based on concentration frequency distribution which comprises said object picture element and these 1st and 2nd criterion values turn into [ both ] beyond the 2nd threshold.

A correcting process which both gradation level differences with the 1st and 2nd adjusted values calculated from said concentration frequency distribution among said object picture elements extract a pixel which is beyond the 3rd threshold as said defect pixel, and corrects this defect pixel using either said 1st [ the ] or the 2nd adjusted value.

[Claim 3]The image processing method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said object picture element is a pixel group in a fixed range centering on said noticed picture element.

[Claim 4]The image processing method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said criterion value is a rate over the total number of object picture elements of pixel frequency which is in a fixed gradation range in said concentration frequency distribution.

[Claim 5]The image processing method according to claim 2, wherein said 1st and 2nd criterion values are the rates over said total number of object picture elements of pixel frequency which is in a fixed gradation range which does not overlap mutually in said concentration frequency distribution.

[Claim 6]The image processing method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said adjusted value is given as average value of a pixel used in order to compute said criterion value.

[Claim 7]The image processing method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said adjusted value is given as a mean value of a gradation level range which a pixel used in order to compute said criterion value can take.

[Claim 8]The image processing method according to claim 1 or 2 replacing in said correcting process by an adjusted value to which said defect pixel was given by claim 6 or 7.

[Claim 9]The image processing method according to claim 2 choosing the 1st or the 2nd adjusted

value, and replacing a defect pixel by comparing the 1st and 2nd pixel numbers used in said correcting process in order to compute said 1st and 2nd criterion values.

[Claim 10]An image processing device which processes image data constituted by pixel, comprising:

An object picture element detection process which detects an object picture element group containing a noticed picture element from which a difference of a gradation level with a neighborhood picture element becomes beyond the 1st threshold from said image data.

A defect pixel determination process judged to be that in which said object picture element contains a defect pixel when a criterion value is calculated based on concentration frequency distribution which comprises said object picture element and this criterion value turns into beyond the 2nd threshold.

A correcting process which a gradation level difference with an adjusted value calculated from said concentration frequency distribution among said object picture elements extracts a pixel which is beyond the 3rd threshold as said defect pixel, and corrects this defect pixel using said adjusted value.

[Claim 11]An image processing device which processes image data constituted by pixel, comprising:

An object picture element detection process which detects an object picture element group containing a noticed picture element from which a difference of a gradation level with a neighborhood picture element becomes beyond the 1st threshold from said image data.

A defect pixel determination process judged to be that in which said object picture element contains a defect pixel when the 1st and 2nd criterion values are calculated based on concentration frequency distribution which comprises said object picture element and these 1st and 2nd criterion values turn into [ both ] beyond the 2nd threshold.

A correcting process which both gradation level differences with the 1st and 2nd adjusted values calculated from said concentration frequency distribution among said object picture elements extract a pixel which is beyond the 3rd threshold as said defect pixel, and corrects this defect pixel using either said 1st [ the ] or the 2nd adjusted value.

[Claim 12]The image processing device according to claim 10 or 11, wherein said object picture element is a pixel group in a fixed range centering on said noticed picture element.

[Claim 13]The image processing device according to claim 10 or 11, wherein said criterion value is a rate over the total number of object picture elements of pixel frequency which is in a fixed gradation range in said concentration frequency distribution.

[Claim 14]The image processing method device according to claim 2, wherein said 1st and 2nd criterion values are the rates over said total number of object picture elements of pixel frequency which is in a fixed gradation range which does not overlap mutually in said concentration frequency distribution.

[Claim 15]The image processing method device according to claim 10 or 11, wherein said adjusted value is given as average value of a pixel used in order to compute said criterion value.

[Claim 16]The image processing device according to claim 10 or 11, wherein said adjusted value is given as a mean value of a gradation level range which a pixel used in order to compute said criterion value can take.

[Claim 17]The image processing device according to claim 10 or 11 replacing in said correcting process by an adjusted value to which said defect pixel was given by claim 15 or 16.

[Claim 18]The image processing device according to claim 11 choosing the 1st or the 2nd adjusted value, and replacing a defect pixel by comparing the 1st and 2nd pixel numbers used in said correcting process in order to compute said 1st and 2nd criterion values.

[Claim 19]An object picture element detection means to detect an object picture element group containing a noticed picture element to which a difference of a gradation level with a neighborhood picture element becomes beyond the 1st threshold from said image data about a computer, A defect pixel judging means judged to be that in which said object picture element contains a defect pixel when a criterion value is calculated based on concentration frequency distribution which comprises said object picture element and this criterion value turns into beyond the 2nd threshold, A computer program making it function as a correcting means which a gradation level difference with an adjusted value calculated from said concentration frequency distribution among said object picture elements extracts a pixel which is beyond the 3rd threshold as said defect pixel, and corrects this defect pixel using said adjusted value.

[Claim 20]An object picture element detection means to detect an object picture element group containing a noticed picture element to which a difference of a gradation level with a neighborhood picture element becomes beyond the 1st threshold from said image data about a computer, The 1st and 2nd criterion values are calculated based on concentration frequency distribution which comprises said object picture element, A defect pixel judging means judged to be that in which said object picture element contains a defect pixel when these 1st and 2nd criterion values turn into [ both ] beyond the 2nd threshold, Both gradation level differences with the 1st and 2nd adjusted values calculated from said concentration frequency distribution among said object picture elements extract a pixel which is beyond the 3rd threshold as said defect pixel, A computer program making it function as a correcting means which corrects this defect pixel using either said 1st [ the ] or the 2nd adjusted value.

[Claim 21]The computer program according to claim 19 or 20 operating a computer with said object picture element being a pixel group in a fixed range centering on said noticed picture element.

[Claim 22]The computer program according to claim 19 or 20 operating a computer with said criterion value serving as a rate over the total number of object picture elements of pixel frequency in a fixed gradation range in said concentration frequency distribution.

[Claim 23]The computer program according to claim 20 operating a computer with said 1st and 2nd criterion values serving as a rate over said total number of object picture elements of pixel frequency which is in a fixed gradation range which does not overlap mutually in said concentration frequency distribution.

[Claim 24]The computer program according to claim 19 or 20 operating a computer with said adjusted value being given as average value of a pixel used in order to compute said criterion value.

[Claim 25]The computer program according to claim 19 or 20 operating a computer with said adjusted value being given as a mean value of a gradation level range which a pixel used in order to compute said criterion value can take.

[Claim 26]The computer program according to claim 19 or 20 operating a computer with replacing in said correcting process by an adjusted value to which said defect pixel was given by claim 24 or 25.

[Claim 27]By comparing the 1st and 2nd pixel numbers used in said correcting process in order to compute said 1st and 2nd criterion values. The computer program according to claim 19 or 20 operating a computer with choosing the 1st or the 2nd adjusted value, and replacing a defect pixel.

[Claim 28]A computer readable storage medium storing a computer program of a statement in any 1 paragraph of claims 19 thru/or 26.

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**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

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[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Field of the Invention]This invention relates to the image processing method and image processing device which correct the dust noise by the dust etc. which are applied to an image processing method and an image processing device, especially are contained in given image data.

[0002]

[Description of the Prior Art]There are some which generally electronic-data-ize the picture drawn on the manuscript as one of the techniques of generating electronic image data using picture input devices, such as a scanner. By this technique, although image data is generable simple, the dust adhering to a manuscript, the dirt adhering to the reading surface of the picture input device, etc. will be read as image data. For this reason, the image of that dirt was included as a noise which originally is not an ingredient of a picture.

[0003]The technique of taking the average value of the picture element data of the circumference to the noticed picture element considered to be a noise as such a removing method of a noise was taken.

[0004]A noise is identified to a processing object image and there is JP,4-316275,A to perform a solvent wiping removal to the noise. When image data is scanned per window of the predetermined size centering on a noticed picture element in this noise rejection method, The window is divided into two or more blocks, and when only the number beyond the 2nd threshold exists in a block of the pixel from which a gradation level difference with a noticed picture element becomes beyond the 1st threshold and the pattern of the block is predetermined shape, a noticed picture element is judged to be a noise. Next, noise correction processing is performed in calculating \*\*\*\*\* and replacing the result of having classified the pixel whose gradation level difference with a noticed picture element is beyond the 3rd threshold at intervals of the predetermined level about the pixel in a window, and having compared the pixel number between the level by noticed picture element data.

[0005]

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention]However, there is a problem which degrades pictures other than the noise of the outline of an object fading by the technique of taking the average value of the surrounding picture element data to a noticed picture element, In a correcting method like JP,4-316275,A, the above-mentioned judgment procedure will have to be stepped on to all the pixels which constitute a picture, and extracting a noise pixel will take time. Since it must ask for the gradation level for replacing to one pixel judged to be a noise from two or more pixels, time will be required also about correction processing.

[0006]This invention was made in view of this point, and the purpose is to detect automatically the dust noise contained in image data as a defect pixel, and to correct it, While shortening the correction processing time of a dust noise substantially, the productivity of high-definition image data is raised, and it is in providing the image processing method and image processing device which can add removal of a dust noise also in a series of automatic processings from reading of image data to an output further.

[0007]

[Means for Solving the Problem]In order to solve the above-mentioned technical problem, a place by which it is characterized [ of the invention according to claim 1 in this application ] is in an image processing method comprising and an image processing device.

[0008](a) The 1st calculating process that computes a gradation level difference of arbitrary

pixels of image data, and a neighborhood picture element of said arbitrary pixel top, the bottom, the left, or/and the right.

[0009](b) The 1st extraction process that extracts arbitrary pixels which become beyond the 1st predetermined threshold, and a neighborhood picture element centering on said arbitrary pixels as an object picture element based on said 1st calculating process result.

[0010](c) The 2nd calculating process that computes a predetermined criterion value and an adjusted value based on concentration frequency distribution which comprises said object picture element.

[0011](d) The 1st determination process judged as said object picture element containing a defect pixel based on said 2nd calculating process when said criterion value turns into beyond the 2nd predetermined threshold.

[0012](e) The 2nd extraction process that extracts a pixel which becomes beyond the 3rd [ predetermined in a gradation level difference with said adjusted value ] threshold as a defect pixel about said object picture element.

[0013](f) A correcting process which corrects said defect pixel using said adjusted value.

[0014]A place by which it is characterized [ of the invention according to claim 2 in this application ] is in an image processing method comprising and an image processing device.

[0015](a) The 1st calculating process that computes a gradation level difference of arbitrary pixels of image data, and a neighborhood picture element of said arbitrary pixel top, the bottom, the left, or/and the right.

[0016](b) The 1st extraction process that extracts arbitrary pixels which become beyond the 1st predetermined threshold, and a neighborhood picture element centering on said arbitrary pixels as an object picture element based on said 1st calculating process result.

[0017](c) The 2nd calculating process that computes the 1st and 2nd predetermined criterion value and 1st and 2nd adjusted values based on concentration frequency distribution which comprises said object picture element.

[0018](d) The 1st determination process judged as said object picture element containing a defect pixel based on said 2nd calculating process when said 1st and 2nd criterion values turn into beyond the 2nd predetermined threshold.

[0019](e) The 2nd extraction process that extracts a pixel which becomes beyond the 3rd [ predetermined in both gradation level differences with said 1st and 2nd adjusted values ] threshold as a defect pixel about said object picture element.

[0020](f) A correcting process which corrects said defect pixel using either said 1st [ the ] or the 2nd adjusted value.

[0021](Work for ) In an image processing device of this invention, a pixel of a prescribed range containing a noticed picture element which measures arbitrary noticed picture elements and neighborhood picture elements, and fulfills predetermined conditions is extracted as an object picture element. A histogram is created about an extracted object picture element, the surface smoothness of a given field is checked from the characteristic of a histogram, and it checks that a defect pixel is contained in a given field. When a defect pixel is contained, a gradation level with correction value determined according to given conditions extracts a pixel which fulfills predetermined conditions as a defect pixel, and replaces a defect pixel with correction value.

[0022]Image deterioration can be prevented by this, and from one noticed picture element, two or more dust noise pixels can be specified, correction processing can be carried out, and time to start total dust noise detection and correction processing can be shortened.

[0023]

[Embodiment of the Invention]The embodiment which applied this invention to below based on the drawing is described in detail and concretely.

[0024](A 1st embodiment) Drawing 1 is a block diagram showing the functional constitution of the image processing device provided with the image processing portion 102 which applied this invention. In drawing 1, 101 is an image reader which reads image data. As an image reader, lay a manuscript, for example on platen glass, and a manuscript is irradiated through platen glass, Optoelectric transducers, such as CCD which condensed the catoptric light and has been arranged to the focal plane, generate the electrical signal for every pixel according to image concentration, and the optical image scanner outputted as image data which digitized the signal is used.

[0025]An interface (I/F) for 103 to input image data from the image processing portion 102, The image memory 104 remembers image data to be, and 105 deltaLgradation level difference 1 calculation part, 106 deltaLgradation level difference threshold value 2 set part and 107 a radius

set part and 108 An object picture element extraction part, 109 — as for rate threshold of flatness F2 set part, and 113, a gradation level width set part and 111 are [ deltaLgradation level difference threshold value 3 set part and 115 ] defect pixel corrected parts a defect pixel judgment part and 114 the rate F1 calculation part of flatness, and 112 a concentration-frequency-distribution preparing part and 110.

[0026]In the composition of drawing 1, the image processing method in a 1st embodiment is explained in detail, referring to drawing 3 and concentration-frequency-distribution drawing 4 in which the flow chart of drawing 2 and picture-element-data arrangement are shown. In drawing 2, image data is already read by the image reader 101, and makes the initial state the state where it is stored in the image memory 104.

[0027]In Step S201, first the deltaL1 calculation part 105, As image data is read from the image memory 104 and it is shown in drawing 3, paying attention to arbitrary picture-element-data A of them Gradation level difference deltaL1x of this noticed picture element A and the comparison position pixels L and M of that left-hand side, Gradation level difference deltaL1y of the noticed picture element A and the upper comparison position pixels D and I is computed as follows. A which is numerals which show a pixel, B, etc. are used also as numerals which show the concentration gradation of the pixel as it is. In order not to leak and to scan the whole picture as a selection method of the noticed picture element A, the method of choosing one by one in order of raster scanning is desirable.

[0028]

$$\text{deltaL1x} = \sum (A_x - (L + M)) \quad (1)$$

$$\text{deltaL1y} = \sum (A_y - (D + I)) \quad (2)$$

The large value of this deltaL1x and deltaL1y is made into the gradation level difference deltaL1 of the noticed picture element A. This calculation processing is performed by the deltaLgradation level difference 1 calculation part 105. In the case of color image data, it is performed as follows, for example. Difference deltaL1xr of the gradation level of a noticed picture element and a pixel on either side, deltaL1xg, and deltaL1xb are calculated for every color component of RGB, and those sums are used for it as deltaL1x of a formula (1). It asks similarly about deltaLy. This method is the same also about the following explanation or other embodiments, and when searching for the difference of a gradation level, it can be obtained in this way.

[0029]The calculating method of deltaL1 is not having restricted to the above-mentioned example, and may use either deltaL1x or deltaL1y. It is good also as a calculating method of using a longitudinal direction and a sliding direction without using left-hand side and the upper part direction for calculation of deltaL1x or deltaL1y. Also in such a case, the gradation level difference of a noticed picture element and a comparison position pixel is used as deltaL1x or deltaL1y. When determining deltaL1, in this embodiment, only the pixel which followed the noticed picture element and one way is used, but the comparison position pixel which separated 2 pixels or more from the noticed picture element may be used.

[0030]deltaL1 is a value computed in order to use the local correlativity which image data has that the correlation degree of the pixel value which constitutes that locally is high. Therefore, if it is a range which can expect to correlate with the noticed picture element as a pixel of the comparison object to a noticed picture element, it can choose. That is, although the pixel which separated 2 pixels or more from the noticed picture element may be used, you must not be any pixel at all, but it is necessary to be a pixel near the noticed picture element, and it good to choose an adjacent pixel like [ it is desirable and ] this embodiment. This range is changed also with the resolution at the time of reading the size and image data of a dust noise which are assumed. For example, when 2 pixels left by a certain fixed pixel number are observed, if it is high resolution in order for the physical size of a dust noise not to change, even if it has a correlation degree of a certain grade, the correlation degree falls with a low resolution. Here, the range which can expect to correlate with the noticed picture element in image data shall be called near the noticed picture element.

[0031]Next, in Step S202, it is judged whether by the object picture element extraction part 108, the 1st threshold deltaL2 and gradation level difference deltaL1 that were set up by the 1st deltaLthreshold 2 set part 106 are compared, and it is set to deltaL1 >= deltaL2. When set to deltaL1 >= deltaL2, it progresses to Step S203. Otherwise, a noticed picture element is moved to the following unsettled pixel.

[0032]The 1st threshold deltaL2 is a value for narrowing down the pixel number used as the determination object of whether for it to be a threshold for judging a possibility that a noticed picture element is a dust noise, and to be a dust noise performed succeedingly after this. Since



it is a value for narrowing down, the purpose can be attained if the value of the 1st threshold  $\Delta L2$  is larger than zero, and it is 1, for example (a gradation level shall be expressed with integers, such as 0–255). In addition, as a deciding method of the 1st threshold  $\Delta L2$ , For example, the comparatively uniform local images which do not include the boundary of an object are experimentally gained from natural pictures etc., the gradation level  $\Delta L1$  ( $\Delta L1R$ ) in there is computed by an upper formula, and how to determine the minimum numerical value used as  $\Delta L1$   $R < \Delta L2$  as  $\Delta L2$  etc. can be considered.

[0033]The  $\Delta L2$  set part 106 can consist of memories which memorize the value inputted beforehand.

[0034]In Step S203, the pixel of the range of the radius set as the radius set part 107 by the object picture element extraction part 108 focusing on the noticed picture element is extracted as an object picture element. For example, in the case of drawing 3, it can be called the object picture element of the radius 2 centering on a noticed picture element.

[0035]The extraction method of an object picture element is not having restricted to the above-mentioned example, and inside [ it is a noticed picture element and an adjacent pixel of the four directions ] may extract either as an object picture element at least. The pixel which left 2 pixels or more may be extracted from a noticed picture element. However, it is restricted to the range of the neighborhood which also mentioned this range above. The operation [ extract / not only / literally ] which sets the state where same processing can be performed to having extracted substantially of memorizing the address of the pixel in an image memory, for example, and making reference possible if needed is also included in extraction here.

[0036]Next, in Step S204, the concentration frequency distribution of the pixel group extracted by the object picture element extraction part 108 is created.

[0037]In the case of color image data, in creation of the above-mentioned concentration frequency distribution, any 1 color is used among each RGB color ingredients, for example.

[0038]Next, the frequency of the image data for every gradation range set as the level width set part 110 at Step S205 is computed, and the rate (rate of flatness) over the total pixel number of the largest thing of frequency is searched for. For example, the case where the concentration frequency distribution of drawing 3 is expressed with drawing 4 is considered. When the level width set as the level width set part 110 is 10, the concentration frequency in each tonal range is as follows.

[0039]

gradation level Concentration frequencies 0–9 01–10 02–11 0...26–35 1...38–47 1639–48 1940–49 1941–50 19 ... 87– 96188– 97 2...246–255 0 — and. Rate F1 of flatness =0.76 is calculated by dividing the concentration frequency 19 with the largest value by the total pixel number 25 among these concentration frequencies.

[0040]Calculation which calculates rate F1 of flatness from concentration frequency distribution is performed by the rate calculation part 111 of flatness. Next, in Step S206, it is judged whether by the defect pixel judgment part 113, the 2nd threshold F2 and rate F1 of flatness that were set up by the 2nd threshold F2 set part 112 are compared, and it is set to  $F1 \geq F2$ . When set to  $F1 \geq F2$ , it progresses to Step S207. Otherwise, a noticed picture element is moved to the following unsettled pixel.

[0041]The 2nd threshold F2 is a threshold for judging the surface smoothness of a reference pixel group, and is a value for judging whether a dust noise exists in an object picture element group. As a deciding method of the 2nd threshold F2, gain experimentally the comparatively uniform local images which do not include the boundary of an object from natural pictures etc., for example, and gradation level F1 ( $F1R$ ) in there is computed by an upper formula, How to determine the minimum numerical value used as  $\Delta F1R < F2$  as F2 etc. can be considered.

[0042]Next, at Step S207, a defect pixel is extracted out of an object image, and correction processing is performed from a normal region portion without a defect. An adjusted value is first computed about the pixel in an object picture element group from the gradation level of two or more pixels used in order to calculate rate F1 of flatness. A pixel with a larger gradation level difference with this adjusted value than the threshold  $\Delta F3$  set as the  $\Delta F$  gradation level difference threshold value 3 set part 114 is extracted as a defect pixel. Next, the defect pixel is replaced by the adjusted value calculated previously.

[0043]Calculation of an adjusted value, extraction of a defect pixel, and correction processing of a defect pixel are performed by the defect pixel corrected part 115. It explains in detail, using drawing 4 about a case with a radius [ like the point ] of 2 pixels as an example as this correction disposal method. First, the range pixel which exists in the biggest level width, for



example, 40–49, of the concentration frequency for which it asked at Step S205 is extracted. Next, the average value 45 of these pixels is calculated. When the threshold  $\Delta F3$  is set to 10, four pixels which had 55 or more gradation levels which added threshold  $F3=10$  in the average value 45 like the point are extracted as a defect pixel. It means that the defect pixel was corrected by replacing these four defect pixels by the adjusted value 45.

[0044] In the upper example, the biggest gradation level of concentration frequency is very good in the average value of the pixel which exists in the range of 39–50 in this case, although three, 39–48, 40–49, 41–50, exist. In the case of color image data, it has also come out to make each color component of a defect pixel into a new value by the average value calculated for every color component of the pixel used for averaging.

[0045] The correcting method of a defect pixel may not be having restricted to the above-mentioned example, but the method which is replaced with the mean value of the pixel group used for calculation of a criterion value, or has been replaced enough and carried out with the picture element data nearest to the average value of an object picture element group may be sufficient as it. However, since the correlativity of local images is used also for amendment of a defect pixel as mentioned above, a radius cannot be set up indefinitely. What can be set up needs to be the range which can expect correlativity, i.e., the neighborhood picture element which is defect pixels.

[0046] It judges whether at Step S208, processing was made to all the pixels, and when not made, a noticed picture element is moved to the following unsettled pixel.

[0047] When judged with all the pixels having been processed at Step S208, processing of the 1st example is ended.

[0048] The dust noise which exists in image data as mentioned above can be detected automatically and efficiently, and can be removed. Detection of a dust noise is performed extracting gradually the number of the pixels which serve as a candidate. And since it does not need to perform decision processing detailed about all the pixels since the judgment which processing takes time is performed in the stage which extracted the pixel number to some extent, and it can detect two or more noise pixels from one more noticed picture element, it can shorten the time which total noise detection and correction take.

[0049] That is, in each stage, the candidate of a noise is detected for a noticed picture element based on the gradation level difference of a noticed picture element and its neighborhood picture element. And it asks for the concentration homogeneity of the pixel of the neighborhood within the limits, and a defect pixel is judged based on the rate of homogeneity. If a defect pixel is extracted eventually, the gradation level of the pixel of the range will amend the defect pixel soon. At this time, in the stage of the beginning of noise detection, the range will be narrowed soon, the increase in efficiency of processing is attained, the range will be extended soon and highly precise-ization of the judgment is attained in the advanced stage. Furthermore in the stage of amendment of a pixel, local continuity with an adjacent pixel can be given to a defect pixel by amending a defect pixel soon using the gradation level of a pixel within the limits.

[0050] (A 2nd embodiment) Drawing 5, drawing 6, and drawing 7 explain the image processing method and image processing device which are a 2nd embodiment of this invention. Drawing 5 is a block diagram showing the functional constitution of an image processing device, gives the same numerals to the block of the same function as a 1st embodiment, and omits explanation. In drawing 5, 1st rate  $F1$  of flatness and the 2nd rate of flatness  $F2$  calculation part, and 503 are rate threshold of flatness  $F3$  set parts the image processing portion which applied this invention 501, and 502.

[0051] In the above-mentioned composition, a portion which is different from a 1st embodiment about the image processing method in a 2nd embodiment is explained, referring to drawing 6 in which the flow chart and concentration frequency distribution of drawing 6 are shown. Also in drawing 6, explanation is omitted about the same processing as drawing 2 of a 1st embodiment.

[0052] In a 2nd embodiment, the frequency of the image data for every gradation range set as the level width set part 110 is computed in Step S601, The 2nd which exist in the rate (rate  $F1$  of flatness) over the total number of object picture elements of the pixel number which exists in the largest gradation level width of frequency, and the gradation level width which does not overlap with the above-mentioned level width is asked for the rate (rate  $F2$  of flatness) over the total number of object picture elements of frequency. For example, the case of concentration-frequency-distribution drawing 7 of the noise picture which exists in the edge part of an object is considered. When the level width set as the level width set part 110 is 20, the concentration frequency in each tonal range is as follows.

[0053]

gradation level Concentration frequencies 0-19 31-20 32-21 4...12-31 8...81-100 13...181 to 2001...246-255 0 — and. The 1st rate F1 of flatness =0.52 is calculated by breaking the concentration frequency 13 with the largest value by a total of 25 object picture elements among these concentration frequencies. Next, the 2nd rate of flatness F2=0.32 is calculated by breaking 8 whose concentration frequency is [ 2nd ] the largest by a total of 25 object picture elements in the range which does not overlap with the gradation level ranges 81-100 in which the largest concentration frequency exists. Calculation which asks for 1st rate F1 of flatness and the 2nd rate F2 of flatness from concentration frequency distribution is performed by rate F1 of flatness, and the F2 calculation part 502.

[0054]Next, in Step S602, it is judged whether by the defect pixel judgment part 113, the rate threshold F3 of flatness, 1st rate F1 of flatness, and the 2nd rate F2 of flatness which were set up by the rate threshold of flatness F3 set part 503 are compared, and it is set to  $F1 \geq F3$  and  $F2 \geq F3$ . When set to  $F1 \geq F3$  and  $F2 \geq F3$ , it progresses to Step S603. Otherwise, a noticed picture element is moved to the following unsettled pixel.

[0055]Next, at Step S603, a defect pixel is extracted out of an object image, and correction processing is performed from a normal region portion without a defect. The 1st adjusted value R1 and 2nd adjusted value R2 are first computed about the pixel in an object picture element group, respectively from the gradation level of two or more pixels used in order to ask for 1st rate F1 of flatness, and the 2nd rate F2 of flatness. R1=93 which averaged in the case of drawing 7 (for example, the gradation level of the pixel to which the 1st adjusted value R1 exists in the gradation level width 81-100), and R2=21 which averaged the gradation level of the pixel to which the 2nd adjusted value R2 exists in the gradation level width 12-31 can be found. A pixel with a larger gradation level difference with this 1st adjusted value R1 and 2nd adjusted value R2 than the threshold  $\Delta F3$  both set as the  $\Delta F$  gradation level difference threshold value 3 set part 114 is extracted as a defect pixel. Next, the defect pixel is replaced by the 1st adjusted value R1 calculated previously.

[0056]Calculation of the 1st and 2nd adjusted values, extraction of a defect pixel, and correction processing of a defect pixel are performed by the defect pixel corrected part 115. The following operations are the same as that of a 1st embodiment.

[0057]In the case of this embodiment, even if it is a noise which exists in the edge part of an object, it can judge that a noticed picture element and the pixel of the neighborhood are noises by seeing two surface smoothness.

[0058]

[Effect of the Invention]As explained above, according to this invention, it becomes possible to shorten correction processing time substantially, without becoming possible to detect only the dust noise by dust etc. automatically as a defect pixel, and to correct it, and causing degradation of a picture.

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[Translation done.]

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**DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS**

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[Brief Description of the Drawings]

[Drawing 1]It is a block diagram of the image processing device in a 1st embodiment of this invention.

[Drawing 2]It is a flow chart explaining the operation in a 1st embodiment of this invention.

[Drawing 3]It is a figure showing the picture-element-data arrangement in a 1st embodiment of this invention.

[Drawing 4]It is an example of concentration frequency distribution of the picture element data in a 1st embodiment of this invention.

[Drawing 5]It is a block diagram of the image processing device in a 2nd embodiment of this invention.

[Drawing 6]It is a flow chart explaining the operation in a 2nd embodiment of this invention.

[Drawing 7]It is an example of concentration frequency distribution of the picture element data in a 2nd embodiment of this invention.

[Description of Notations]

101 Image reader

102 Image processing portion

103 Interface (I/F)

104 Image memory

105 deltaLgradation level difference 1 calculation part

106 deltaLgradation level difference threshold value 2 set part

107 Radius set part

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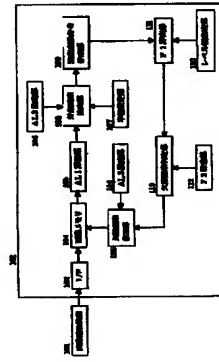
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(54) 【発明の名称】 画像処理方法及び画像処理装置

(57) 【要約】

【課題】 画像データに含まれるダストノイズを欠陥面素として自動的に検出して修正することで、ダストノイズの修正処理時間を大幅に短縮するとともに高画質の画像データの生産性を向上させ、さらには画像データの検み込みから出力までの一連の自動処理においてもダストノイズの除去を付加できる画像処理方法及び画像処理装置を提供すること。

【解決手段】 任意の注目面素と近傍面素と比較して所定の条件を満たす注目面素を含む所定範囲の面素を対象面素として抽出する。抽出した対象面素に関してヒストグラムを作成し、ヒストグラムの特性から所与面素の平坦性を確認し、所与領域内に欠陥面素が含まれていることを確認する。欠陥面素が含まれている場合には所定の条件に従って決定した修正値と階調レベルが所定の条件を満たす面素を欠陥面素として抽出し、欠陥面素を修正値で置換する。



【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 面素により構成される画像データと処理する画像処理方法であって、

前記画像データから、近傍面素との階調レベルの差が第1の階調以上となる注目面素を含む対象面素群を抽出する対象面素抽出工程と、

前記対象面素群で構成される階調分布に基づいて判定基準値を求め、該判定基準値が第2の階調以上となる場合に前記対象面素が欠陥面素を含むことを判定する欠陥面素判定工程と、

前記対象面素のうち、前記階調分布から求めた修正値との階調レベルの差が第3の階調以上である面素を前記欠陥面素として抽出し、該欠陥面素を前記修正値を用いて修正する修正工程とを備えることを特徴とする画像処理方法。

【請求項2】 面素により構成される画像データと処理する画像処理方法であって、

前記画像データから、近傍面素との階調レベルの差が第1の階調以上となる注目面素を含む対象面素群を抽出する対象面素抽出工程と、

前記対象面素群で構成される階調分布に基づいて第1及び第2の判定基準値を求め、該第1及び第2の判定基準値がともに第2の階調以上となる場合に前記対象面素が欠陥面素を含むことを判定する欠陥面素判定工程と、

前記対象面素のうち、前記階調分布から求めた第1及び第2の修正値との階調レベルの差がともに第3の階調以上である面素を前記欠陥面素として抽出し、該欠陥面素を前記第1もしくは第2の修正値のいずれかを用いて修正する修正工程とを備えることを特徴とする画像処理方法。

【請求項3】 前記対象面素は、前記注目面素を中心とした一定範囲内にある面素群であることを特徴とする請求項1または2に記載の画像処理方法。

【請求項4】 前記判定基準値は、前記階調分布において、一定階調域内にある面素数の全対象面素数に対する割合であることを特徴とする請求項1または2に記載の画像処理方法。

【請求項5】 前記第1及び第2の判定基準値は、前記階調分布において、相互に重複しない一定階調域内にある面素数の前記全対象面素数に対する割合であることを特徴とする請求項2に記載の画像処理方法。

【請求項6】 前記修正値は、前記判定基準値を算出するために用いられる面素の平均値として与えられることを特徴とする請求項1または2に記載の画像処理方法。

【請求項7】 前記修正値は、前記判定基準値を算出するために用いられる面素の取り得る階調レベル範囲の中間値として与えられることを特徴とする請求項1または2に記載の画像処理方法。

【請求項8】 前記修正工程において、前記欠陥面素を

請求項6もしくは7で与えられた修正値で置換することを特徴とする請求項1または2に記載の画像処理方法。

【請求項9】 前記修正工程において、前記第1及び第2の判定基準値を算出するために用いられる第1及び第2の階調域を比較することによって、第1もしくは第2の修正値を選択し、欠陥面素を置換することを特徴とする請求項2に記載の画像処理方法。

【請求項10】 面素により構成される画像データを処理する画像処理装置であって、

前記画像データから、近傍面素との階調レベルの差が第1の階調以上となる注目面素を含む対象面素群を抽出する対象面素抽出工程と、

前記対象面素群で構成される階調分布に基づいて判定基準値を求め、該判定基準値が第2の階調以上となる場合に前記対象面素が欠陥面素を含むことを判定する欠陥面素判定工程と、

前記対象面素のうち、前記階調分布から求めた修正値との階調レベルの差が第3の階調以上である面素を前記欠陥面素として抽出し、該欠陥面素を前記修正値を用いて修正する修正工程とを備えることを特徴とする画像処理装置。

【請求項11】 面素により構成される画像データを処理する画像処理装置であって、

前記画像データから、近傍面素との階調レベルの差が第1の階調以上となる注目面素を含む対象面素群を抽出する対象面素抽出工程と、

前記対象面素群で構成される階調分布に基づいて第1及び第2の判定基準値を求め、該第1及び第2の判定基準値がともに第2の階調以上となる場合に前記対象面素が欠陥面素を含むことを判定する欠陥面素判定工程と、

前記対象面素のうち、前記階調分布から求めた第1及び第2の修正値との階調レベルの差がともに第3の階調以上である面素を前記欠陥面素として抽出し、該欠陥面素を前記第1もしくは第2の修正値のいずれかを用いて修正する修正工程とを備えることを特徴とする画像処理装置。

【請求項12】 前記対象面素は、前記注目面素を中心とした一定範囲内にある面素群であることを特徴とする請求項10または11に記載の画像処理装置。

【請求項13】 前記判定基準値は、前記階調分布において、一定階調域内にある面素数の全対象面素数に対する割合であることを特徴とする請求項10または11に記載の画像処理装置。

【請求項14】 前記第1及び第2の判定基準値は、前記階調分布において、相互に重複しない一定階調域内にある面素数の前記全対象面素数に対する割合であることを特徴とする請求項2に記載の画像処理方法とを備えることを特徴とする請求項2に記載の画像処理装置。

【請求項15】 前記修正値は、前記判定基準値を算出

するために用いられる画素の平均値として与えられることを特徴とする請求項10または11に記載の画像処理方法装置。

【請求項16】 前記修正値は、前記判定基準値を算出するために用いられる画素の取り得る階調レベル範囲の中間値として与えられることを特徴とする請求項10または11に記載の画像処理装置。

【請求項17】 前記修正工程において、前記欠陥画素を請求項15もしくは16で与えられた修正値で置換することとを特徴とする請求項10または11に記載の画像処理装置。

【請求項18】 前記修正工程において、前記第1及び第2の判定基準値を算出するために用いられる第1及び第2の画素数を比較することで、第1もしくは第2の修正値を選択し、欠陥画素を置換することを特徴とする請求項11に記載の画像処理装置。

【請求項19】 コンピュータを、

前記画像データから、近傍画素との階調レベルの差が第1の閾値以上となる注目画素を含む対象画素群を抽出する対象画素抽出手段と、  
前記対象画素群から、該判定基準値が第2の閾値以上となる場合に前記対象画素が欠陥画素を含んでいるものと判定する欠陥画素判定手段と、  
前記対象画素のうち、前記階調度数分布から求めた修正値との階調レベルの差が第3の閾値以上である画素を前記欠陥画素として抽出し、該欠陥画素を前記修正値を用いて修正する修正手段として機能させることを特徴とするコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項20】 コンピュータを、

前記画像データから、近傍画素との階調レベルの差が第1の閾値以上となる注目画素を含む対象画素群を抽出する対象画素抽出手段と、  
前記対象画素群から、該判定基準値が第1及び第2の判定基準値がともに第2の閾値以上となる場合に前記対象画素が欠陥画素を含んでいるものと判定する欠陥画素判定手段と、  
前記対象画素のうち、前記階調度数分布から求めた第1及び第2の修正値との階調レベルの差がともに第3の閾値以上である画素を前記欠陥画素として抽出し、該欠陥画素を前記修正値を用いて修正する修正手段として機能させることを特徴とするコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項21】 コンピュータを、

前記画像データから、近傍画素との階調レベルの差が第1の閾値以上となる注目画素を含む対象画素群を抽出する対象画素抽出手段と、  
前記対象画素群から、該判定基準値が第1及び第2の判定基準値がともに第2の閾値以上となる場合に前記対象画素が欠陥画素を含んでいるものと判定する欠陥画素判定手段と、  
前記対象画素のうち、前記階調度数分布から求めた第1及び第2の修正値との階調レベルの差がともに第3の閾値以上である画素を前記欠陥画素として抽出し、該欠陥画素を前記修正値を用いて修正する修正手段として機能させることを特徴とするコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項22】 前記判定基準値は、前記階調度数分布において、一定階調幅内にある画素数の全対象画素数において、一定階調幅内にある画素数の全対象画素数

に対する割合となるようコンピュータを機能させることを特徴とする請求項19または20に記載のコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項23】 前記第1及び第2の判定基準値は、前記階調度数分布において、相互に重複しない一定階調幅内にある画素数の前記全対象画素数に対する割合となるようコンピュータを機能させることを特徴とする請求項20に記載のコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項24】 前記修正値は、前記判定基準値を算出するために用いられる画素の平均値として与えられるようコンピュータを機能させることを特徴とする請求項19または20に記載のコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項25】 前記修正値は、前記判定基準値を算出するために用いられる画素の取り得る階調レベル範囲の中間値として与えられるようコンピュータを機能させることを特徴とする請求項19または20に記載のコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項26】 前記修正工程において、前記欠陥画素を請求項24もしくは25で与えられた修正値で置換するようコンピュータを機能させることを特徴とする請求項19または20に記載のコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項27】 前記修正工程において、前記第1及び第2の判定基準値を算出するために用いられる第1及び第2の画素数を比較することで、第1もしくは第2の修正値を選択し、欠陥画素を置換するようコンピュータを機能させることを特徴とする請求項19または20に記載のコンピュータプログラム。

【請求項28】 請求項19乃至26のいずれか1項に記載のコンピュータプログラムを格納することを特徴とするコンピュータ可読記録媒体。

【0001】

【発明の属する技術分野】 本発明は、画像処理方法及び画像処理装置に係り、特に所与の画像データに含まれる埃等によるダストノイズを修正する画像処理方法及び画像処理装置に関する。

【0002】

【従来の技術】 一般に、電子画像データを生成する手法のひとつとして、原稿に描かれた画像をスキャナなどの画像入力装置を用いて電子データ化するものがある。この手法では原稿に画像データを生成できるものの、原稿に付着したホコリや、画像入力装置の部材取り面に付着した汚れなども画像データとして取り込まれてしまう。このため、本来画像の成分ではないノイズとしてその汚れ等の像が含まれてしまっていた。

【0003】 このような、ノイズの除去方法としてノイズと見做される注目画素に対してその周囲の画素データの平均値を取ったりするような手法が取られていた。

【0004】 また処理対象画像に対してノイズを識別し、そのノイズに対して除去処理を施すものとして特開

平4-316275号がある。このノイズ除去方法では、注目画素を中心とした所定の大きさの意算位で画像データを走査する際、その意を複数のブロックに分割し、注目画素との階調レベルの差が第1の閾値以上となる画素がブロック内に第2の閾値以上の数だけ存在する場合にそのブロックのパターンが所定の形状である場合に注目画素をノイズと判定する。次に、意内の画素に関して注目画素との階調レベルの差が第3の閾値以上である画素を所定のレベル範囲で分類し、そのレベル間で画素数を比較した結果をから修正値を求め、注目画素データと置換することでノイズ修正処理を行っている。

【0005】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】 しかしながら、注目画素に対して周囲の画素データの平均値をとる手法ではオブジェクトの輪郭がボカたりするなどのノイズ以外の画像を抽出するのに時間が掛かってしまう。また、ノイズと判断された1つの画素に対して置換するための階調レベルを複数の画素の平均から求めなければならないので修正処理に際しても時間を要してしまう。

【0006】 本発明は、斯かる点に鑑みてなされたもので、その目的は画像データに含まれるダストノイズを大

陸画素として自動的に検出して修正することで、ダストノイズの修正処理時間を大幅に短縮するとともに高画質の画像データの生産性を向上させ、さらには画像データの飲み込みから出力までの一連の自動処理においてもダストノイズの除去を付加できる画像処理方法及び画像処理装置を提供することにある。

【0007】

【課題を解決するための手段】 上記の課題を解決するために、本願における請求項1に記載の発明の特徵とするところは、以下により構成される画像処理方法、及び画像処理装置にある。

【0008】 (a) 画像データの任意の画素と、前記任意の画素の上または/及び下、または/及び右、または/及び左の近傍画素との階調レベルの差を算出する第1の画素を欠陥画素として抽出し、欠陥画素を修正値で置換する。

【0009】 (b) 前記第1の算出工程結果に基づいて、所定の第1の閾値以上となる任意の画素と、前記任意の画素を中心とした近傍画素とを対象画素として抽出する第1の抽出工程。

【0010】 (c) 前記対象画素で構成される階調度数分布に基づいて所定の判定基準値及び修正値を算出する第2の算出工程。

【0011】 (d) 前記第2の算出工程に基づいて、前記判定基準値が所定の第2の閾値以上となる場合に前記対象画素が欠陥画素を含んでいると判定する第1の判定工程。

【0012】 (e) 前記対象画素に関して、前記修正値との階調レベルの差が所定の第3の閾値以上となる画素を欠陥画素として抽出する第2の抽出工程。

【0013】 (f) 前記欠陥画素を、前記修正値を用いて修正する修正工程。

【0014】 また、本願における請求項2に記載の発明の特徵とするところは、以下により構成される画像処理方法、及び画像処理装置にある。

【0015】 (a) 画像データの任意の画素と、前記任意の画素の上または/及び下、または/及び右、または/及び左の近傍画素との階調レベルの差を算出する第1の算出工程。

【0016】 (b) 前記第1の算出工程結果に基づいて、所定の第1の閾値以上となる任意の画素と、前記任意の画素を中心とした近傍画素とを対象画素として抽出する第1の抽出工程。

【0017】 (c) 前記対象画素で構成される階調度数分布に基づいて所定の第1及び第2の判定基準値及び第1及び第2の修正値を算出する第2の算出工程。

【0018】 (d) 前記第2の算出工程に基づいて、前記第1及び第2の判定基準値が所定の第2の閾値以上となる場合に前記対象画素が欠陥画素を含んでいると判定する第1の判定工程。

【0019】 (e) 前記対象画素に関して、前記第1及び第2の修正値との階調レベルの差がともに所定の第3の閾値以上となる画素を欠陥画素として抽出する第2の抽出工程。

【0020】 (f) 前記欠陥画素を、前記第1もしくは第2の修正値のいずれかを用いて修正する修正工程。

【0021】 (作 用) 本発明の画像処理装置においては、任意の注目画素と近傍画素を比較して所定の条件を満たす注目画素を含む所定範囲の画素を対象画素として抽出する。抽出した対象画素に関してヒストグラムを作成し、ヒストグラムの特性から所与画素の平坦性を確認し、所与領域内に欠陥画素が含まれていることを確認する。欠陥画素が含まれている場合には所与の条件に従って決定した修正値との階調レベルが所定の条件を満たす画素を欠陥画素として抽出し、欠陥画素を修正値で置換する。

【0022】 これにより画像劣化を防ぎ、かつ1つの注目画素から複数のダストノイズ画素を特定、修正処理することができ、トータルのダストノイズ後出及び修正処理に掛かる時間を短縮させることができる。

【0023】

【発明の実施の形態】 以下に、図面に基づいて本発明を適用した実施形態を詳細かつ具体的に説明する。

【0024】 (第1の実施形態) 図1は本発明を適用した画像処理部102を備えた画像処理装置の構成を示すブロック図である。図1において、101は画像データの読み取りを行う画像読取装置である。画像読取装

置としては、例えばはブラテンガラス上に原稿を配置し、ブラテンガラスを通して光を原稿に照射し、その反射光を集光して焦点面に配置したCCDなどの光電変換素子により画像濃度に応じた画素ごとの電気信号を生成し、その信号をデジタル化した画像データとして出力する光学式読取スキヤナが用いられる。

【0025】103は画像処理部102から画像データを入力するためのインターフェース（I/F）、104は画像データを記憶する画像メモリ、105は階調レベル差 $\Delta L1$ 算出部、106は階調レベル差 $\Delta L2$ 算出部、107は半径設定部、108は対象画像抽出部、109は濃度数分布作成部、110は階調レベル補正部、111は平坦率F1算出部、112は平坦率階調値F2設定部、113は欠陥画像判定部、114は階調レベル差 $\Delta L3$ 設定部、115は欠陥画像修正部である。

【0026】図1の構成において、図2のフローチャートと画像データ配置を示す図3及び濃度数分布図4を参照しながら、第1の実施形態における画像処理方法について詳細に説明する。なお、図1においては、画像データが既に画像読取装置101により読み込まれ、画像メモリ104に格納されている状態を初期状態としている。

【0027】まずステップS201において、 $\Delta L1$ 算出部105は、画像メモリ104から画像データを読み出し、そのうちの任意の画素データ $x$ に注目し、図3に示すようにこの注目画素Aとその左右の比較位置画素L、Mとの階調レベル差 $\Delta L1x$ と、注目画素Aと上の比較位置画素D、1との階調レベル差 $\Delta L1y$ とを次のように算出する。なお、画素を示す符号であるA、Bなどは、そのまま画素の濃度階調値を示す符号としても用いる。また、注目画素Aの選択方法としては、画像全体を均れなく走査するために、ラスタ走査順に順次選択する方法が望ましい。

【0028】

$$\Delta L1x = |Ax2 - (L+M)| \quad \dots (1)$$

$$\Delta L1y = |Ax2 - (D+I)| \quad \dots (2)$$

この $\Delta L1x$ と $\Delta L1y$ の大きい値を注目画素Aの階調レベル差 $\Delta L1$ とする。この算出処理は階調レベル差 $\Delta L1$ 算出部105にて行われる。なお、カラー画像データの場合には、例えば図3のように、RGBの各色成分ごとに、注目画素と左右の画素との階調レベルの差 $L1x$ 、 $\Delta L1x$ 、 $\Delta L1xb$ を求め、それらと和を式(1)の $\Delta L1x$ として利用する。 $\Delta L1y$ についても同様にして求める。この方法は、以下の説明やその他の実施形態についても同様であり、階調レベルの差を求める場合にはこの要領を得ることができるとする。

【0029】 $\Delta L1$ の算出方法は上記例に限ったことではなく、 $\Delta L1x$ または $\Delta L1y$ のどちらかを用いても良い。また、 $\Delta L1x$ または $\Delta L1y$ の算出に、左側、

上側方向を使用せずに、左右方向、上下方向を使用するといった算出方法としても良い。その場合には注目画素と比較位置画素との階調レベル差を $\Delta L1x$ や $\Delta L1y$ として用いる。更に、 $\Delta L1$ を決定する際に、本実施形態では注目画素と一方向に連続した画素のみを使用しているが、注目画素から2画素以上離れた比較位置画素を用いても構わない。

【0030】 $\Delta L1$ は、画像データが有する、局所的にそこを構成する画素値の相関度が高いという局所的相関性を利用するために算出される値である。そのため、注目画素に対する比較対象の画素としては、注目画素と相関していることを期待し得る範囲であれば選択できる。すなわち、注目画素から2画素以上離れた画素を使用しても構わないというものの、まったくどの画素であって構わないというのではなく、注目画素近傍の画素である必要がある。望ましくは本実施形態のように隣接画素を選択するのが良い。想定されるガストノイズの大きさと画像データを都が込んだ際の相関度によってもこの範囲は変動する。例えば、ある一定の画素数分離れた2画素に注目した場合、ガストノイズの物理的大きさには変動しないため相関度であればある程度の相関度を示していても、低解像度ではその相関度は低下する。なお、ここでは、画像データにおいて注目画素と相関していることを期待し得る範囲を注目画素の近傍と称するものとする。

【0031】次にステップS202において、対象画像抽出部108により、第1の階調 $\Delta L2$ 設定部106にて設定された第1の階調 $\Delta L2$ と階調レベル差 $\Delta L1$ とを比較し、 $\Delta L1 \geq \Delta L2$ となるかどうかの判定を行う。 $\Delta L1 < \Delta L2$ となった場合にはステップS203に進む。そうでなければ注目画素を次の未処理の画素に移す。

【0032】第1の階調 $\Delta L2$ は、注目画素がガストノイズである可能性を判定するための階調であり、この後引き継いで行われるガストノイズであるか否かの判定対象となる画素数を絞り込むための値である。絞り込むための値であるから、第1の階調 $\Delta L2$ の値は0より大きいければ、例えば1であればその目的を達成できる（階調レベルは0～255などの整数で表されるものとする）。そのほか、第1の階調 $\Delta L2$ の決定方法としては、例えば図3に示すように、注目画素Aと上の比較位置画素D、1との階調レベル差 $\Delta L1$ と、注目画素Aと左右の比較位置画素L、Mとの階調レベル差 $\Delta L1$ とを比較し、その大きい値を注目画素Aの階調レベル差 $\Delta L1$ とする。この算出処理は階調レベル差 $\Delta L1$ 算出部105にて行われる。なお、カラー画像データの場合には、例えば図3のように、RGBの各色成分ごとに、注目画素と左右の画素との階調レベルの差 $L1x$ 、 $\Delta L1x$ 、 $\Delta L1xb$ を求め、それらと和を式(1)の $\Delta L1x$ として利用する。 $\Delta L1y$ についても同様にして求める。この方法は、以下の説明やその他の実施形態についても同様であり、階調レベルの差を求める場合にはこの要領を得ることができるとする。

【0033】なお、 $\Delta L2$ 設定部106は、あらかじめ入力された値を記憶するメモリで構成できる。

【0034】ステップS203においては、対象画像抽出部108により、注目画素を中心として半径設定部107に設定されている半径の範囲の画素を対象画素とし

て抽出する。例えば図3の場合注目画素を中心とした半径2の対象画素と見える。

【0035】対象画素の抽出方法は上記例に限ったことではなく、注目画素及びその上下左右の隣接画素のうち少なくともいずれかを対象画素として抽出しても良い。更に注目画素から2画素以上離れた画素の範囲にも構わない。ただし、この範囲も前述した近傍の範囲に限られる。なお、ここでいう抽出には、文字通り抽出するというだけでなく、例えば画像メモリにおける画素のアドレスを記憶しておく必要に応じて参照可能としておくといった、実質的に抽出したと同様の処理が行える状態を設定する動作も含まれる。

【0036】次にステップS204において、対象画像抽出部108にて抽出された画素群の濃度数分布を作成する。

【0037】なお、上記濃度数分布の作成においてカラー画像データの場合には、例えば、RGBを色成分のうちいずれか一色を用いる。

【0038】次にステップS205にて、レベル補正部110に設定されている各階調ごとの画像データの度数を算出し、度数の最も大きいものの全画素数に対する割合（平坦率）を求める。例えば、図2の濃度数分布が図4で表される場合を考える。レベル補正部110に設定されているレベル幅が10である場合、それぞれの階調範囲における濃度数は以下の様になる。

階調レベル	濃度数
0～ 9	0
1～ 10	0
2～ 11	0
...	
26～ 35	1
...	
38～ 47	16
39～ 48	19
40～ 49	19
41～ 50	19
...	
87～ 96	1
88～ 97	2
...	
246～255	0

そしてこれら濃度数のうち一番値の大きい濃度数19を全画素数25で割ることで平坦率F1＝0.76を求める。

【0040】なお、濃度数分布から平坦率F1を求める計算は平坦率算出部111にて行われる。次にステップS206において、欠陥画像判定部113により、第2の階調F2設定部112にて設定された第2の階調F2と平坦率F1を比較し、F1 $\geq$ F2となるかどうかの

判定を行う。F1 $\geq$ F2となった場合にはステップS207に進む。そうでなければ注目画素を次の未処理の画素に移す。

【0041】第2の階調F2は、参照画素群の平坦性を判定するための階調であり、対象画素群内にガストノイズが存在するか否かの判定するための値である。第2の階調F2の決定方法としては、例えば、自然画像などからオブジェクトの境界を含む比較的一般的な局所画像を実験的に獲得し、そこに階調レベルF1（F1）を式で算出して、 $\Delta F1R < F2$ となら最小の度数をF2として決定する方法が考えられる。

【0042】次にステップS207にて、対象画素の中から欠陥画素を抽出し、欠陥のない正常領域部分から修正処理を行う。まず対象画素群内における画素に関して、平坦率F1を求めるために用いた濃度の画素の階調レベルから修正値を算出する。この修正値と階調レベル差が、階調レベル差 $\Delta F3$ 設定部114に設定されている階調 $\Delta F3$ よりも大きい画素を欠陥画素として抽出する。次にその欠陥画素を先に求めた修正値で置き換える。

【0043】なお、修正値の算出、欠陥画素の抽出及び欠陥画素の修正処理は欠陥画像修正部115にて行われる。この修正処理方法としての一例として、先ほどの半径2画素の場合について図4を用いて詳細に説明する。先ず、ステップS205にて求めた濃度数の最も大きなレベル幅例えば40～49に存在する範囲画素を抽出する。次にこれらの画素の平均値45を求める。階調 $\Delta F3$ が10と設定されている場合、先ほどの平均値45に階調F3＝10を足した55以上の階調レベルを持つ画素4つを欠陥画素として抽出する。この4つの欠陥画素を修正値45で置き換えることにより欠陥画素は修正されたことになる。

【0044】なお、上の例では濃度数の最も大きな階調レベルは39～48、40～49、41～50の3つが存在するが、この場合、39～50の範囲に存在する画素の平均値をとっても良い。また、カラー画像データの場合には、平均算出に用いた画素の色成分ごとに求めた平均値で欠陥画素の各色成分を新たな値とすることも出きる。

【0045】欠陥画素の修正方法は上記例に限ったことではなく、判定基準値の算出に用いられた画素群の間値で置き換えたり、対象画素群の平均値に最も近い画素データで置き換えたりする方法でも構わない。ただし、前述したように、欠陥画素の修正にもまた局所画像の相関性を利用しているの、半径は無関係には設定できない。設定可能なのは相関性が期待できる範囲、すなわち欠陥画素の近傍画素である必要がある。

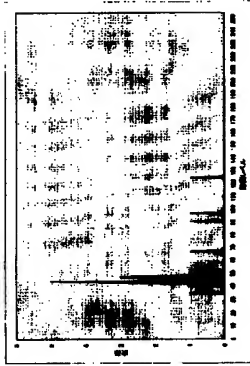
【0046】ステップS208にて、全ての画素に対して処理がなされたかどうかの判定を行い、なされていない場合には注目画素を次の未処理の画素に移す。



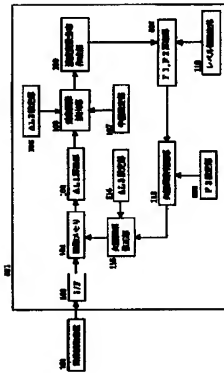




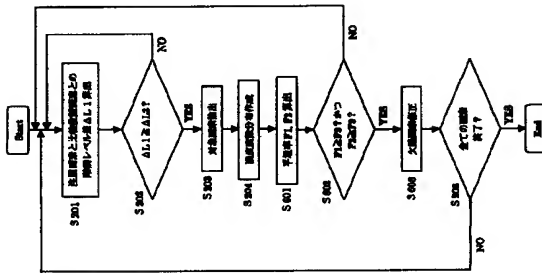
【図4】



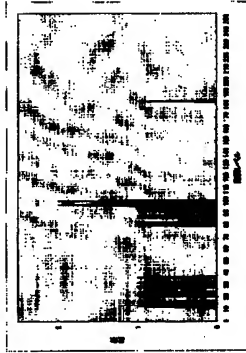
【図5】



【図6】



【図7】



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